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Letter dated 3 April 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith views on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, which I believe will be of interest to you.

The Government of the Republic of Cuba is deeply concerned by the deterioration of the situation in the Middle East. Given their numerous significant implications for international peace and security, the events in that region are of interest to all States Members of the United Nations.

However, at the public meeting of the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, held on 30 March, the right to speak of States which are not members of the Security Council was restricted arbitrarily.

Once again, as a result of the volatile dynamics of the Security Council, the necessary transparency and representativeness which should characterize this body's work are sacrificed to serve the narrow national interests of certain permanent members.

Faced with such a situation, Cuba considers it its duty to publicly place on record its views on the subject of the debate in the aforementioned public meeting, which are enclosed with this letter (see annex).

I should like to request that this letter and its annex be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Rodrigo **Malmierca Diaz**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Cuba

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Annex to the letter dated 3 April 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Position of the Republic of Cuba on the current situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

Cuba fully supports the views expressed by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People at the public meeting of the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, held on 30 March 2006.

In addition, Cuba should like to place on record its views on events of great relevance to the subject, which took place last March.

The fact that the Security Council was not even capable of approving a Presidential Statement, which was the least that could have been expected, following the serious deterioration of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as a result of the Israeli military attack on the prison in Jericho on 14 March last, is a cause for concern.

Once again, the Security Council has failed to assume its responsibilities for maintaining international peace and security.

The Council has remained paralysed, and we all know the reasons why, even in the face of the indisputable fact that Israel committed this latest act of aggression in grave violation of its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law.

It was not enough that the powerful images of the events made us all witnesses to the unjustifiable attacks which were carried out against the prison for almost 10 hours, and included the deployment of helicopters, tanks, bulldozers and armoured transport vehicles by the Israeli occupation army.

The attacks, obviously planned for at least several days, commenced scarcely minutes after the sudden withdrawal of the monitors of the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the prison.

Israel's recent hostile actions add to its extensive record of acts and violations of the most basic human rights of the Palestinian people for decades. They include illegal settlements, the demolition of homes, arbitrary detentions, extrajudicial executions, torture, the construction of a separation wall in Palestinian lands and the stifling of the Palestinian economy.

It is no secret that the Government of Israel's attitude of open defiance of United Nations Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and the rules of international law is to a large extent the result of the Security Council's inaction and passivity.

We all know why different standards are applied when it comes to Israel. It is a typical example of what happens when a permanent member of the Security Council which is an ally of Israel exercises its prerogatives arbitrarily. Hypocrisy and double

standards continue to prevail in the Council, protected by the anachronistic and antidemocratic veto privilege.

The United States of America has now exercised its veto a total of 29 times in the Security Council on issues related to the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. That does not include the constant veto threats in closed informal meetings, which have impeded action from being taken on a considerable number of draft resolutions and Presidential Statements, as was the case with the timely draft statement prepared by the delegation of Qatar following the attacks on the prison in Jericho.

Israel must immediately release the Palestinian prisoners and hand them over to the Palestinian authorities. It must withdraw all of its forces from Jericho so that that territory can return to the situation that existed before the military attack.

The Security Council cannot continue, through its silence, to be complicit in these events. The State terrorism exercised by Israel must be condemned. The acts of aggression against the Palestinian people must cease, as must the application of unilateral measures and faits accomplis, which are removed from any negotiation track with the Palestinian side, and do not contribute in any way to the search for a definitive, just and lasting settlement to resolve the protracted conflict.

This body must demand without further delay that Israel cease its acts of force once and for all and comply with the numerous resolutions on the Middle East adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly.

This is the only path to just and lasting peace.